

I would like to contribute a few thoughts on the issues of copyright, DRM and Patents.

Firstly, on copyright, I think that the current status quo works well and does not require 'fixing'. In particular, extension of the current 50 year limit would do more harm to society than the benefit it would do those who would gain financially from the extension. We live in a world where much of our culture is built upon a free commons, and an extension of copyright duration would curtail the growth in culture. We have already seen examples in the USA

where companies like Disney have built a vast body of work upon the free commons - and then essentially stop any further work being built upon those commons for several generations. To extend the copyright period in the UK would essentially prevent anyone from 'standing on the shoulders of giants'.

DRM is simply a ludicrous notion, which in an instant destroys any concept of fair use of copyright material. A good guideline would be to restrict the way that copyright owners can control access to their work to methods which would

be possible if the work was a book. If I buy a book, I have the right to read it anywhere, allow a computer to scan it and read it to me, read it as many times as I like, lend it to a friend and so on. The governments' business is to provide a firm legal framework in which copyright can work well - not to make laws to force people to access copyrighted works only upon particular types of device running particular software. DRM hands over far too much control to the copyright holders.

Finally, patents clearly work well in areas where the cost of innovation far outweighs the cost of obtaining and defending patents. The automotive and pharmaceutical industries spring to mind. However, in other areas where there

is essentially no barrier between the inventive thought and implementation (software development being the most obvious), the cost of obtaining and defending patents is several orders of magnitude higher than the cost of innovation. Patents should not be allowed in such areas as instead of encouraging innovation, they bog the whole process down, and instead, foster the growth of large entrenched monopolies.

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